

Normal is boring by Jancys-Blue-Bayou

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Summary: After the dust settles, Jonathan asks Nancy out on their first actual date.

Normal is boring

A/N: Prompt from hopelessromanticclass on Tumblr who wanted something on Jancy dealing with their insecurities. It turned into this.

She says it in the car on the drive back to Hawkins from Murray's place.

"I'm not retreating... anymore. I mean... I just want you to know that I'm... when we're back home I'm not going anywhere. I want to hang out with you all the time. Not just when the world is ending."

He nods.

"I'd like that," is all he can think to say. It might be the understatement of the century.

She smiles shyly but they don't talk about it anymore for the rest of the way. Opting instead for smalltalk about Murray or their story and listening to his latest mix tape instead. He can't let go of the fact that no one's answering at home. It doesn't feel right. Borrowing the phone at a gas station just past the border back in Indiana and still getting no answer does it for him. He doesn't say anything and speeds the rest of the way. She seems to understand.

And then they get home and the world is ending once again. His little brother is possessed by a demonic monster, other monsters walk the earth and there's a gate from their world to the Upside Down. And through it all she's with him. She comes home with him to find his house wrecked. She goes with him to get their loved one's out of the Lab. She puts her hand on his shoulder, strengthening him when he's apologizing to Will's unconscious body. She shields her brother, but also him and his mom, with a shotgun. He clings to her when he can't bear Will's screaming. *She gets the monster out of his brother.*

So he feels pretty damn close to her after everything. Trust issues? What trust issues? He trusts Nancy. Then again... he still don't fully understand why she would want to be with him when the world's not

ending. He's the weird loner with no money or social capabilities and a deadbeat dad who walked out. And she is Nancy Wheeler. She is perfect. And yet she knows all that stuff about him and still said that she wanted to be with him.

He hasn't been in school this week, staying home to take care of his mom and Will. So he hasn't seen her much since everything. But she came by on Wednesday "just to check in". After talking with both his mother and Will they sat out on the porch. He asked her how it had been, going back to school. She shrugged and said people were idiots and asked when he was going back. He told her next week. Then she asked how he was holding up and he didn't quite understand the question. It was Will who'd been possessed and had a burn on his abdomen, and it was his mom who'd watched her boyfriend get eaten by a monster. When he said that she smiled softly, put a hand on his knee and said that he's selfless and if he needed help or just someone to talk to, please call.

When she left his mother looked curious and asked about him and Nancy. It was the first time the whole week that she didn't look worried about Will or distraught over Bob so he told her about it, them. Not *all* of it, dear god, but the gist of it. She smiled and said he should take Nancy out on Friday. He did not agree, he wanted to take care of them at home, but she badgered him about it all through Thursday and half of Friday. So he finally called Nancy when school had let out and managed to stammer out the question if she wanted to go out that evening. His heart skipped when she sounded happy and said "I'd love to".

So after having gone monster hunting together, having exorcised his little brother and having slept together, now he was in his car, on his way to pick her up for their first actual date. Between his mother insisting on ironing what she deemed was his best shirt and Will laying on the couch and asking about him and Nancy, it was a relief to be alone. Though it also meant time alone with his thoughts and he once again found himself wondering what the hell he was doing. He had never been on a date before. He really had no clue about this. Should he get her flowers? Damn, he wished he'd thought of that earlier. No time for that now. Then again he wasn't sure he could afford it anyway. Wait, where should he take her? They should get

something to eat, but where? He'd only ever eaten out at Ray's Diner because it was the cheapest place in town. It was pretty okay but could he really take her there? It was the only place he knew. Damnit. Steve must have been able to take her to any place in town. He so wish he could. This could be embarrassing. And after dinner, what then? He turns on to Maple and soon pull up on the curb outside her house at the end of the cul-de-sac. He tries to fix his hair in the rearview mirror and tries to shut out the thoughts of how bad it looks or how his wiry frame and scuffed clothes look.

The front door swings open as soon as he knocks.

"Hi!" She smiles at him.

"Hi," he mirrors. Good start, he figures. Wow she looks amazing. He should probably say something. "Uh, ready to go?"

"Yeah," she answers before grabbing her coat and shouting towards the living room, to no one in particular it seems, that she was going out.

"You look nice," he says quickly as they walk towards his car.

"Thanks," she says while he blushes profusely.

He opens the passenger side door for her because he's not an idiot. She blushes slightly and mumbles a thanks before getting inside.

"So how are you?" He asks as he turns the key in the ignition.

"Good. I'm really glad you called. How are you? How are things at home?"

"Uh, okay. I mean, it's getting better, I think. Will's feeling better."

"That's good."

"Yeah. So uh, is Ray's okay? Sorry um, I don't know any- "

"Ray's is great!"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

He remembers to breathe and they make smalltalk the rest of the drive, which calms him. He's reminded that it's Nancy, that he knows he can actually talk to Nancy.

"The papers still haven't run our story," she says as they sit down in an empty booth in the diner.

"Give it time, they're probably checking it out on their end, y'know? Trying to get more info, factcheck."

"Yeah, I guess. I hope you're right. They have to run it. I need to be able to sleep at night."

He raises his eyebrows at that and she seem to catch herself.

"You can't sleep at night?" He asks, worried.

She sighs.

"I uh... yeah. I usually get four hours a night at the most. It used to be nightmares that woke me up. Not every night, but. Now sometimes I just can't fall asleep, can't turn off my brain. Keep thinking about everything. About Barb, mostly. And her parents. I just... the truth got to come out there. Then maybe I can sleep."

"I wish you'd told me earlier."

"I didn't want you to think I'm weak."

"You're not weak," he says with emphasis. How could she possibly think that? "You're the strongest person I know."

"You are."

"No," he protests.

"I've slept well twice in the past year," she continues. "Both times with you," she explains in a low voice.

Oh. At Murray's after... yeah. And then when they both crashed down into his bed after Will's exorcism. It had felt like the natural thing to do.

"I haven't slept well either. Except for those times, too," he confesses.

She nods.

"Don't worry about the story," he changes the subject back. "Murray seemed to know what he was talking about."

"Yeah he was... right about a lot of stuff..." she mumbles, unreadable expression on her face.

"So how's it been at school? I mean you said that-" he changes subject again, but is interrupted by a sneering voice.

"What can I get you?" He looks up to see that the voice belongs to Stephanie, a year above them in school who apparently picks up shifts here as a waitress. She's got pen and paper in her hands and a look of mild disdain on her face as she looks down at Nancy.

"Hey Steph," Nancy greets.

"Hello Nancy. Fancy seeing you here... with *him*," Stephanie replies, throwing a glance his way as she adds the last part.

He silently wishes for a black hole to open up beneath him and swallow him down. But Nancy seems unfazed.

"What do you mean?" She asks in a neutral tone.

"Thought you would've moved on to someone else by now," Stephanie says and he's sure that he hears her add "Slut" under her breath.

"Wow, nice to see you too," Nancy deadpans.

"Oh I'm sorry, Princess, how rude of me. You'll have to excuse me, I don't have your nice manners. Maybe you can help me out? What's proper etiquette for when you feel the need to give pervy loner boy another pityfuck but mommy hasn't changed your sheets since the last guy was in your bed? Skip school and check into a motel, right?"

Nancy loses her resolve and her face falters for a second and he so wants to say or do something but Nancy recovers before he can come up with anything.

"Cheeseburger."

"What?" Stephanie asks, confused.

"One cheeseburger. With fries and..." She looks over at him. "What do you want?"

"Uh, same," he answers after a second. "And a Coke," he adds.

"Me too. So, two cheeseburgers with fries and two cokes. That's what you can get us. Do you need to write it down maybe?"

Stephanie seems to be searching for a comeback but eventually just turns around in a huff and walks off.

"So, that's kind of what it's been like," Nancy says as she turns to him. "At school, I mean."

"I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault," she shrugs.

"Maybe this wasn't a good i-" he starts.

"No!" She quickly interrupts, voice rising a bit. "No, I'm really glad you called and wanted to go out tonight. I wanted to see you," she continues in a calmer tone as she leans forwards, resting her arms on the table.

"I wanted to see you too but... if you gotta endure that when people see you with me maybe-"

"I don't care what they think," she says firmly, putting a hand over his. "I don't," she repeats with even more emphasis.

Stephanie smashes down two glasses on the table.

"Thanks Steph!" Nancy calls after her in an overly sweet tone as

Stephanie walks away again.

"They call it taking the high road but I don't know, I really hope I'm just annoying the crap out of her," she says. That, coupled with her tone and the glint in her eye as she says it makes him laugh.

"I just... I feel like... why bother with high school drama, after everything?" She continues.

He nods.

"I mean you've done it right the whole time."

"What do you mean?" He asks, confused.

"Do you care what people at school think of you?"

"No, not really."

"That's what I mean. That's the right attitude to have. Wish I'd been like that."

"Yeah but it's not like... like I don't care at all, what people think."

"Of course not. But you don't change who you are because of what others think. You're just... you, regardless. That's awesome."

He doesn't know what to say to that. Struggling between either "thank you" or telling her everything about her that is amazing, he decides that both would probably be a bit weird to say. Thankfully they're interrupted again by Stephanie now slamming down their plates on the table.

"You okay?" She asks after Stephanie's walked away again and he realizes that he's just been sitting staring at her while she busied herself with her food.

"Oh! Yeah, yeah, sorry," he's quick to answer and picks up his burger like a normal person would.

Her raised eyebrows keep insisting though, which in itself is amazing, how she can do that.

"I have no idea what I'm doing here," he confesses.

"Oh. Just here, tonight?" She asks.

He nods.

"I feel that way about life in general," she says.

"Oh."

"Yeah."

"Wait, what do you mean?"

"What do you mean?" She counters with a smile.

"I asked first."

"Real mature, Byers," she ribs him. She looks down at her food, takes a deep breath and then continues. "I mean I don't know who I am or what I want to do with my life except that I'm tired of caring what people at school think and I don't want to end up like my parents."

"You're perfect."

The words spill out of him before he can stop himself. Her eyebrows shoot up once again and her cheeks start to get a little red.

"I- I mean you're... uh," he stammers. Wow yep that was a bit much but he can't backpedal now. He don't really want to either. "You're you. You're *Nancy Wheeler*. You're not just another suburban girl. You're the smartest and strongest person I know. I think you can do whatever you want to do with your life."

She doesn't immediately reply, instead just staring at him.

"Sorry," he quickly adds then. That was way too much.

"No... I appreciate it. Thank you," she says, looking like she's still processing his words. "But what did you mean when you said that you don't know what you're doing?"

"Uh..." Well, shit, he's already stumbled into being way to honest

anyway and she hasn't run away yet so he might as well continue. "This. A date, like... I've never been on one before. I don't... I wish I'd gotten you flowers and it's kind of embarrassing that this is the place I could afford and I don't really know what to do."

"Okay, well, never mind the flowers. And I told you, I like this place. Can you promise me something?"

"Sure."

"Please don't waste money on me."

"Um... what?"

"I just want to be with you. It doesn't bother me if you don't have a lot of money. I mean, I wish you had it for your own sake. Not mine. So please stop being embarrassed about it. It doesn't matter to me."

"Okay. But..." Should he go there? Screw it, might as well now. "I don't really get why... you want that. Being with me, I mean."

Her face scrunches up in confusion, then softens into a smile.

"Um, because you're kind and smart and fun and brave and caring and strong and gets me..." she lowers her voice and leans closer as his cheeks flush. "And you have nice eyes and I like your hair a lot and you're a really good kisser and that night at Murray's was the best I ever had."

She adds that last part in a hushed tone and immediately looks very embarrassed herself while he can feel his cheeks go beatred. They both look away. He meets her gaze again but they both give off a nervous chuckle at the same time and are forced to look away again, both now starting to giggle.

"Okay," he starts when they've collected themselves somewhat. "I don't have anything to compare it to but I'd say this is kind of a weird date, right?"

"Kind of," she nods and laughs again. It's the sweetest sound he knows. "But I like it. Normal is boring," she adds resolutely.

"Yeah."

"Think we broke the ice at least."

"Think we had done that already," he notes.

"Yeah you're right," she answers, biting her lip in a fruitless attempt at containing a grin, which he finds adorable.

They both busy themselves with their remaining fries for a second.

"I was nervous," she then says.

"*You* were nervous?"

"Yeah! I changed outfit five times."

"You look great."

"You said that," she smiles. "You look good too. I like that shirt."

"You and mom both then," he says. At her questioning look he elaborates. "She's deemed it to be my best shirt. She insisted on ironing it for tonight."

"Aw, that's sweet."

They finish their meals amidst giggling and more innocuous smalltalk.

"Do you want to get out of here?" She asks.

"Where to?"

"I've got an idea," she says, smiles slyly at him and suddenly her foot is running up his leg. Oh.

"Okay," he chokes out. She grins and pulls back.

He gets out his wallet to pay, she protests but eventually relents when he insists.

"Okay but next time we split it," she says firmly.

"Fine," he says because he knows that's not an argument he can win.

"At least let me get the tip though," she then says and digs in her purse.

"You're seriously going to tip her even after...?" He questions.

"Yes," she answers, putting a bill down on the table. Digging further in her purse she then produces lipstick. Before he can say anything she's using it as a writing tool on the one dollar bill.

"F... U..." she spells out. "There we are," she finishes and looks up with a devilish smirk.

"Ready to go?"

"Yeah," she answers and gathers her things. Standing up she takes his hand, waving the other towards the counter.

"Bye Steph!" She calls out. The other girl turns around and glares.

"Nice to see you!" He adds on their way out which apparently is enough to provoke another fit of giggles from Nancy, who at least manages to hold it in until they're outside.

"So I hear Lovers Lake is kind of nice..." She whispers in his ear as they walk to his car.

"I see," he mumbles back.

The much-rumored spot is thankfully deserted when they get there. He looks over to her when he's put in park, a bit unsure of the next move. But she takes care of that, promptly leaning across the midconsole and kissing him. Which makes everything else melt away.

"This is the kind of normal teenagers stuff I can get behind," she mumbles a couple of minutes later when they with a brief interruption to their makeout session has shifted to the backseat.

"Mmhm," he agrees, kissing down her neck to her collar bone.

"Do you have to get home?" She asks afterwards when they're still in the backseat, her head resting on his shoulder.

"Soon. Not yet though," he answers after looking at his watch.

"Cool."

"I had a great time tonight, Nance."

"Me too."

He doesn't want to ruin the moment but he feels he has to ask.

"Do you think you'll be able to sleep tonight?"

She takes a deep breath before answering. He tightens his arm around her shoulders.

"I think so. Hope so."

"Please call me, if it ever gets to... whatever. If you want, I mean. Just know that you can."

"Thanks. I know. Wish you could be there. Then I know I could sleep."

"I would but..."

"I know, I know, you can't leave Will and your mom. I wouldn't either if I were you."

"You could come to our house," he suggests, thinking out loud before realizing it's stupid. "Sorry, bad idea you-"

"No, wait," she shushes him and sits up slightly, thinking intently. "Could I, really?" She asks after a second.

"Yeah, but I mean-"

"I would like that. I could sneak out. And sneak back in. And Mike could cover for me if needed. I think he owes me."

"You sure you want to, at night I mean..."

"Yes."

Her determination silences him.

"Okay. Well in that case my window's open anytime you need it," he says and presses a kiss to the top of her head.

They just lay there for awhile until other cars start to pull up, at which point they get back in the front seat and he takes her home. They part with a kiss, a "call me" and a nod.